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COMMENTARY

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HOW SHOULD WE WRITE THE HISTORY OF THE MIDDLE EAST?

First of all, may I say how warmly I welcome this opportunity to express something of what I owe to French masters, colleagues, and friends. Half a century ago, when I first became concerned with the history of the Middle East as a young instructor at the American University of Beirut, I might have found it more difficult to say this. France itself was unknown to me at that time. I looked at it mainly as the rather unsuccessful ruler of the country where I was living and working, and to which I was bound by ancestral ties. My attitude may have expressed something of the Arab nationalist sentiment of most of my colleagues and students at the American University, and also something of the tradition of Anglo-French rivalry in the Levant.

Looking back now at that period in the history of Lebanon and Syria, I see it in rather a different light. If French mandatory rule did not show the political wisdom of France at its best, neither did British rule in Palestine to the south. I am more fully aware now than I was then of one of the monuments which the French left behind them: the magnificent series of studies in which scholars have illuminated the history of Syria and the nature of its society (as they have done also for Egypt and the Maghrib). I am happy to see that this tradition of scholarship still survives, thanks to the organization of research—the CNRS and the French institutes—which makes it possible to train scholars in every generation to a higher level than those of other Western countries.

I am particularly pleased to see that studies of modern history and society are flourishing again. Such studies, and in particular those of the specifically French science of human geography, were encouraged by Robert Montagne, when he was director of the Institut Français de Damas in the 1930s, and are now reviving. If the French were a little slower than the Anglo-Saxons to take up the scientific study of the contemporary Middle East, they have now caught up with them.

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I have always been touched by the welcoming attitude of French scholars. The first whom I knew was Claude Schaeffer, the archaeologist who excavated Ugarit (Ras Shamra) in Syria. He was a wartime acquaintance, almost a colleague, in England; and I remember vividly a visit to Ras Shamra much later, in 1957, when he himself could not go there in the aftermath of the Suez affair. Of Robert Montagne, and of Pierre Rondot, who is still active in his retirement, I remember the courtesy with which they received me, the generous way in which they reviewed my first book (although they could not have liked it or thought it to be just), and the delicacy with which they drew my attention to ways in which they believed it should have been different.

I always regret that I never met Jean Sauvaget, whose book on Aleppo I so much admire, and who was too ill to receive me when I wished to visit him in Paris shortly before he died. But I remember with pleasure several meetings with Louis Massignon, in Paris and Cairo. I cannot say I conversed with him, but I listened entranced to his extraordinary flow of ideas and images expressed in beautiful language. I cannot forget the old man with a ravaged face and haunted eyes, always dressed in mourning, perhaps not quite knowing who I was, but trying, as one human being to another, to bear witness to the grace which had fallen upon him on that day in Iraq in 1908 which for him marked the first irruption of the Divine Stranger into his life and the discovery of its mystic orientation.

May I also mention here another French scholar who has died very recently, and long before his time, Jean-Pierre Thieck? He was perhaps the most gifted scholar of his generation in the field he was making his own, that of modern urban history, and his gifts were of the heart as well as the mind; he was a dear friend of many in the countries where he lived: France, England, the United States, Egypt, Syria, and Turkey.

I shall speak later of others who are still living and working, and of how they have helped me to understand the evolution of the Middle East in modern times—a task which has occupied me during the last five years or so, while I have been trying to write a general history of the region. I want to say something now about some of the questions I have had to answer, and which everyone who undertakes such a task must face.

What is the Middle East? This is the first question which arises. In English, the term was first brought into general use by political and military writers in order to refer to an area which might extend, according to circumstances, from Morocco to Afghanistan. It has gradually replaced the older and more precise term "Near East," which could be taken to refer to the countries lying around the eastern Mediterranean, and which had formed part of the Ottoman Empire. They had a sufficient similarity of religious, cultural, and social nature and historical destiny to make them an intelligible field of study. Is it possible to regard the "Middle East" in the same way as being such a unitary field?

In recent years there has been a tendency to go beyond it and write the history of the Muslim peoples as a whole: of all those countries in which Islam is the main inherited religion. To mention such syntheses which have appeared in English recently: the *Cambridge History of Islam*, Marshall Hodgson's *Venture of Islam*, and Ira Lapidus's *History of Islamic Societies*.[1] Of these, I find the first the least satis-

factory and useful, in spite of the high quality of most of its chapters. It shows a tendency to look at the subject in isolation, as if Islam and its culture had been imposed upon a tabula rasa. It leaves the reader with little sense of living societies into which the religion of Islam came and among which it developed, and which must have affected the form which it took. The first chapter (and it is a very good one) tells us about pre-Islamic Arabia, but we are told almost nothing about the societies, beliefs, and cultures of the Byzantine and Sasanian empires. The chapters on Islam in India (and they too are good ones) tell us little about the Hindu societies and civilization into which Islam came. It may be because (as in all the Cambridge histories) each chapter is written by a different author that no clear idea emerges from the book about what is specifically "Islamic" in what we call the Muslim world—what, if any, are the shared characteristics of the societies which we call "Muslim."

The work of Marshall Hodgson addresses such questions, and it is more impressive and seminal. Its central subject is the area "from the Nile to the Oxus," which he regards as one of the small number of core areas of human culture. He is always conscious, however, of continuities in space and time. It is dangerous, he believes, to look at regions, even core regions, in isolation. They should be seen within a continuum of the *oikoumene*, the whole world of settled agriculture, cities, and high culture, stretching from the Atlantic coast of Africa to eastern Asia. Within this there have been a number of relatively autonomous centers of civilization, but we should never forget their relations with each other and the wide radiation of their influence. There are continuities also in time. What we call "Islamic society" and "Islamic civilization" were not created out of nothing; rather, their history marked a new phase in that of the ancient societies and civilizations of the region "between Nile and Oxus."

Hodgson's book gave me this sense of continuity (although I had already caught a glimpse of it in Arnold Toynbee's *Study of History*), and it gave me something else as well. It showed me how difficult it would be to consider the whole of the core area from Nile to Oxus within the same framework. Although the various countries in the area can be called "Islamic," different categories of interpretation are needed for them. Hodgson made a broad distinction between the countries of Arabic speech lying around the eastern end of the Mediterranean, on the one hand, and Iran, on the other, with Iraq uneasily balanced between them, after the first centuries of Islamic history when the two areas were brought into a cultural unity with Iraq as their center.

The two regions, Hodgson maintained, should be seen in different lights. The influence of Iran has radiated far beyond what is usually called the Middle East; if we wish to look at its political, and even more its cultural, history, we shall have to look beyond the Middle East, to inner Asia and northern India. The time scale in which the history of the two areas should be seen is also different. For Hodgson, the Arab countries around the eastern Mediterranean had their period of creative achievement during the first three or four centuries of Islamic history; after that, they remained on a kind of plateau of time, during which changes did indeed take place, but slowly and without altering the bases of the society and its culture. The Iranian (or Turco-Iranian) world, on the other hand, reached the height of its achievement much later, perhaps in the 16th and 17th centuries, with the power of

the three great empires (Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal), the continuing originality of its thought and literature, the splendor of its great buildings and other artifacts. Even in the 18th century it still had a great influence in the world. This was shown by the spread of its major languages. When the British East India Company took over the administration, first of Bengal and then of other parts of India, its officials carried on much of their business through the medium of Persian; at the end of the 18th century, the German philosopher of history, J. G. von Herder, spoke of Arabic as the lingua franca of the world, the most universal language that had ever existed.[2] A special feature of Iranian culture was the persistence of a conscious memory of the pre-Islamic past, preserved in its epic poetry; among the Arabic-speaking peoples, something of the past survived in popular romances, but there was a sense in which the coming of Islam erased the memory of what had gone before.

It was, partly at least, the ideas found in Hodgson's book which made me decide to limit my own book to regions where Arabic was the main medium of cultural expression: the Arab countries of the Middle East and, by extension, those of the Maghrib (but perhaps there are problems which I may not have fully understood in trying to interpret the history of the Maghrib in the same framework).

If these are the limits of the book in space, what are its limits in time? My own earlier studies, and my teaching until I retired, had lain mainly in the history of the 19th and 20th centuries, and there was a practical reason why this should have been so: the wish of most students to learn about the origins of the present situation in the Middle East (even the 19th century has become a little distant and unreal for the present generation). The study of this modern period is, I still believe, important in itself; we cannot deny that the transformation of the Middle East, and indeed of the whole world, has been so great as to mark a real break with the past. We should not take too simplistic a view of what has happened, however. To take one of the obvious signs of change—the transformation of political, administrative, and legal systems—what happened in the 19th century was not, although it might have appeared to be, the imposition of something wholly new. It was the gradual, painful, and incomplete transformation of an ancient and complex system of government, that of the Ottoman Empire. Similarly, when we deal with the expansion of European trade and its impact upon local patterns of production, exchange, and consumption, we should always be aware of those sectors of the economy which did not change, or changed more slowly. (Dominique Chevallier has put forward important ideas about this.[3])

In the same way, those movements of thought and artistic creation which responded to the new power and ideas of Europe did not, in the work of most thinkers and writers, represent a complete break with the past, but rather a more or less responsible attempt to adapt traditional categories of thought to the needs of changing societies in a new world. H. A. R. Gibb made this clear in his seminal work, *Modern Trends in Islam*,[4] but I do not think I had learned the lesson well enough when I wrote my own book, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*. It now seems to me to have been wrong in laying too much emphasis upon ideas which were taken from Europe, and not enough upon what was retained, even if in a changed form, from an older tradition. I have learned much in recent years from

such books as Gilbert Delanoue's study of Egyptian writers of the 19th century, Hamid Enayat's *Modern Islamic Political Thought*, and Christian Troll's work on Sayyid Ahmad Khan.[5]

In trying to explain the history of the Middle East in modern times we should always be aware of two interlocking rhythms of change: that which reforming governments and thinkers and external forces tried to impose upon society, and that which a great stable society with a long and continuous tradition of thought and of life in common was producing from within itself, partly by its own internal movement, and partly in reaction to forces coming from outside. (I owe my understanding of the two rhythms of change, and the complex relations between them, to the work of Jacques Berque, and in particular *L'Egypte, impérialisme et révolution.*[6])

The practical conclusion to be drawn from this is that, in writing about the 19th and 20th centuries, we should never forget the Ottoman impact: the lasting influence of those centuries when most of the Arab countries, and many others, were incorporated into the last great empire of Islam. In the past it was easy to forget this. I remember almost the first conversation about the Middle East which I ever had, when Philip Hitti came to stay with my parents in Manchester, probably in 1935. He had just finished his *History of the Arabs*, and I asked him what period it covered. He told me that, apart from a short epilogue on the last century and a half, he had ended in the 15th century. I asked him why he had ignored the centuries in between, and he said: "There was no Arab history then." If history is interpreted in a way which was common at that time, as being concerned mainly with the exercise and transmission of political power, the answer was reasonable, but it is one which no historian would give today. We are all aware now of the importance of the Ottoman centuries. The Ottomans created and maintained not only a lasting and effective structure of government and administration, but an area of free trade within which commercial exchanges were comparatively easy; within this area there flourished a distinctive urban society, not only in Istanbul but in the great provincial centers, and a system of taxation and control of land under which agricultural production could be carried on. There was also a distinctive Ottoman culture: not only the Turco-Iranian culture of the court and the ruling elite, but that "Arab-Ottoman" culture of the elites in the Arab provincial cities about which Karl Barbir has written.[7]

The greatest task of the present generation of Middle Eastern historians is perhaps to explore this Ottoman world, and it is now possible to do it because of the opening and exploitation of the relevant sources: not only the vast archives of the Ottoman central government in Istanbul, but those in the provincial cities, which are of equal, and for some subjects of even greater, importance. They are to be found wherever direct Ottoman rule existed, from Bosnia to Algiers. They include not only administrative papers, but the records of the qadi's courts. The qadi was not only a judge in the narrow sense, he also played an essential part in Ottoman administration and urban life, and his records contain not only judicial decisions, but orders sent from the Ottoman sultan, contracts of marriage and of property sales, and registers of the property of deceased persons, for it was the qadi's duty to make sure property was divided among the heirs according to the

prescriptions of Islamic law. As well as these, there are documents of the administration of waqfs, which can also throw light upon the ownership of urban property and the arrangement of urban space.

The importance of such sources can be seen if we compare a work written before they were fully available with one written afterwards. *Islamic Society and the West*, by H. A. R. Gibb and H. Bowen, has been called "the last great work of European orientalism."[8] A survey of Ottoman government, society, and religious culture in the late 18th century, just before the impact of European power was felt fully, it asks a number of questions about the nature of Ottoman administration and the organization of society and its culture; while the questions about religious culture could, to a great extent, be answered by use of the literary sources available to the authors, those about Ottoman society and the control of it by government could not. It is André Raymond above all who has shown us how to use the new kinds of sources which are now available to answer such questions as Gibb and Bowen asked, in a long series of articles and, more systematically, in his great book on Cairo, *Artisans et commerçants au Caire au XVIIIème siècle.*[9] He has trained and inspired others, but more in France and the United States than in Britain.

To understand the Ottoman age, however, we must look even further back. The Ottoman Empire can be seen in two different perspectives. It was a new and unique creation, but in a sense it also marked the culmination of the whole history of Muslim political societies. The Ottoman Turks may be called the Romans of the Muslim world. They imposed a definitive order upon what had developed earlier: a bureaucracy, a legal system, and Sunni Islam itself, with its balance between two ways of looking at religion, as a system of ideal social behavior and as a path toward experiential knowledge of God.

This achievement of the Ottomans, in giving final order to the development of Muslim society, can be seen in their use of the two central Islamic theories of political authority: they claimed to rule as just Muslim sultans, defending the frontiers of Islam and preserving its laws and organizing the annual pilgrimage, but also as padishahs (rulers chosen by God to keep the world on its axis by regulating the activities of the different social orders).

So, as I thought about the subject, I found myself obliged to go back beyond the Ottomans to the earlier centuries of Islamic history, far beyond my own sphere of special knowledge. But should we go back further still? Ideally, perhaps, all history books should begin with the first words of the Bible, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth"; but the flesh is weak, and I began my book with the first appearance of the religion of Islam and the formation of a society in which Islam was the dominant religion and Arabic the main language of high culture. This clearly began something new: a new kind of intellectual life crystallized around the acceptance and interpretation of a revealed scripture, new patterns of political action, and a different kind of urban society. It made a break also in the collective memory of the Arab Muslim peoples. The physical monuments of the past became in a sense unreal: relics of mythical peoples of ancient times, almost inexplicable physical deposits like meteorites. (Ulrich Haarmann has written about the survival of the relics of ancient Egypt in Muslim Egypt.[10])

We should not, of course, misunderstand the way in which this new life grew up, or give a too simplistic explanation of it. One of the weaknesses of many of the older books about Islamic history is that they see the rise of Islam in a kind of vacuum: as the creation of something ex nihilo in western Arabia. This is true only in the strictest sense: the expansion of the caliphate brought with it the Qurʾan and the Arabic language. The structure of Islamic thought and society developed, however, not primarily in the Hijaz, but in the great areas of high civilization which were incorporated into the caliphate. Their development can, therefore, be seen, in a sense, as a continuation of social and intellectual processes which were already in existence, but were now expressed in a new language and oriented toward the articulation of the message contained in a new scripture. This process took place above all in Iraq, with its high level of cultivation, which was sufficient to support a complex urban life, as western Arabia could not do; lying at the center of an area formed by the union within the same empire of two regions which had previously been separate, that of the Mediterranean basin and that of the Indian Ocean; and with a rich cultural soil formed by the meeting of Greek and Persian culture and expressed in a fermentation of religious ideas: Christian, Jewish, Mazdean, and Manichean. It is the great merit and originality of Ira Lapidus's book that he lays emphasis upon the creative role of Iraq: the first "Islamic" society which grew up there was a new version of the ancient Babylonian society, and in its turn it served as a "template" for all future Islamic societies, with their different geographical positions and historical experiences.

We should always be aware of the Greek and Persian cultures which lie behind that of Islam, and we should be aware, too, of something lying beyond what we call the "Arab world." This is not a self-explanatory concept, one which carries all the reasons for its nature and history within itself. The question posed or implied in Marshall Hodgson's book is a genuine one: Can we write anything less than the history of the whole world of settled agriculture and cities? It is good that some historians should be brave enough to attempt no less than this: such Muslim historians as al-Tabari and al-Masʿudi; the European philosophers of history in the 18th and 19th centuries (among whom I find Herder to be more satisfying than Hegel, with his idea of civilization as something which has moved westwards, discarding the empty shells of its previous embodiments, so that, for example, nothing is left of Islamic civilization except "oriental ease and repose"[11]); and some brave historians in the present generation. For most of us, however, a rather uneasy compromise is all we can attempt. In my book, the "history of the Arab peoples" broadens out into something more, in three periods in particular.

The first period includes the first three or four centuries of Islamic history: the period when a more or less united caliphate existed and an Islamic society was formed, and when Islam was articulated into a system of doctrines, laws, practices, and institutions. In this period we cannot avoid seeing the countries where Arabic was, or was becoming, the main language of life and thought in a broader context. Secondly, there is the period of unchallenged Ottoman rule, from the 16th to the 18th century, when most of the Arab countries were incorporated in a larger political unit with its capital at Istanbul, and in which the main political attention of its

rulers was turned elsewhere, toward the west or north. It was only in its very last period that the Ottoman Empire was to become a Turco-Arab partnership. Thirdly, there is the age of European expansion in the 19th and early 20th centuries, when power, influence, goods, and ideas radiated from Western Europe, and ultimate decisions were made not in Cairo or Istanbul, but in Paris, London, and the other capitals of Europe, and made in the light of the worldwide interests, so that the Middle Eastern peoples and their interests had to fit into a larger framework.

In writing about these three periods, I found it comparatively easy to choose a central theme which would give unity to the historical narrative: the articulation of Islamic society in the first, the formation and development of the Ottoman system of control in the second, and the expansion of Europe in the third. These are themes which make it possible to impose order upon the diversity of historical events. In writing of two other periods, however, I found it more difficult to discover a unifying theme. In the half-millennium stretching from the 11th to the 15th century, there is a bewildering diversity of phenomena: the rise and fall of local dynasties with shifting frontiers, and the emergence of different centers of culture, differing rhythms and directions of social development. It is possible to look at the unit formed by Egypt and Syria (using the latter name in the broadest sense) as being in some sense the cultural and political as well as the geographical center of the "Arab world," with influence radiating from it. But can the categories of explanation which are appropriate to this central region also be used to elucidate the history of Iraq, on the one hand, and of the Maghrib (in particular the far Maghrib), on the other?

In others words, can there really be a history of the Arabs during this period? Is there any alternative to a history, which will be repetitive and boring, of one country after another and, in the political sphere, one dynasty after another? At a certain level one can indeed discern a certain unity of discourse. When we read the autobiography of Ibn Khaldun or the travels of Ibn Battuta, we are conscious of a world to which they belonged and in all parts of which they could feel at home: a world with Cairo as its metropolis and the Holy Cities as its poles of attraction. This is a limited kind of unity, however; and to find a satisfactory unifying theme I had to look beyond it, to a certain "family resemblance" between Arab Muslim societies: on the one hand, certain shared characteristics of climate and geographical formation giving rise to the development of rather similar modes of production and exchange, with the social forms concomitant with them, and on the other, a common religion and language.

There seemed to me to be a sufficient similarity to make possible the formation of certain "ideal types" in the sociologist's sense: that is to say, logically constructed patterns of behavior which are never fully exemplified in any particular society at any one time, but which, when used with caution and sensitivity, can help to explain the nature of many different societies. In this part of the book I have tried, therefore, to construct a number of "ideal types": a certain relationship between different ways of using land and water, for settled agriculture and pasture; a certain way of organizing rural peoples, which is referred to as "tribalism"; a certain form of urban life, with a dominant elite of merchants and men of learning,

having an alliance of interests with the rulers, and both of them having an uneasy relationship with the "common people"; certain shared forms of devotion, summed up in the "pillars of Islam" or exemplified in the lives of the "friends of God"; and a certain literate culture which held together in uneasy combination the acceptance of the revealed Word of God and the use of human reason.

The other period in which it may be difficult to find a unifying theme is that which covers the last fifty years or so, with the decline and extinction of French and British rule and the emergence of separate nation-states. In this period, is there really such a thing as an "Arab world"? Is there more than a group of countries, in all of which Arabic is the main language and Islam the dominant religion, but each of which is developing in its own way and becoming ever more different from the others, if not hostile to them? In spite of appearances, I think there is a unifying theme to be found here: a unity of discourse which extends beyond the elite of high culture, certain shared problems of identity, the common attempt to answer such questions as these: What is it to be an Arab in the modern world? What is it to be a Muslim in the modern world? The answers to such questions, expressed in the Arabic language or embodied in political movements, are disseminated more widely than ever before: by travel, by migration in search of employment from the poor to the rich countries, and through the media—films and television programs, books published in Cairo and Beirut, and newspapers in London and Paris. Any book on the modern period must express a dialectic of unity and variety: local interests, the imperatives of a geographical situation, and the persistence of inherited traits of character and historical memories, all drawing the Arabic-speaking peoples further from each other, while other forces pull them closer together. It was with such thoughts in my mind that I decided to call my book "a history of the Arab peoples."

The most urgent question, not only for this book but for many others, is: What shall we include in our history? The ideal may be that of a "total" history which includes all the phenomena of life in common, but to say this is to beg a question. If history is not to be simply a miscellany of facts, it must have some principles of selection, emphasis, and arrangement; certain criteria, whether acknowledged or implicit, of what is important and what is not; and certain hypotheses about the ways in which different processes of change are related to each other.

So far as the writing of Middle Eastern history is concerned, to ask such questions is a fairly new activity. Until the last generation, the study of the history of Islam and the Middle East was carried on mainly by writers who were not primarily historians. The writing of history by those who think of themselves as historians, with minds formed by the historical culture of their age, only began recently: in Britain after the expansion of "Oriental studies" in the 1940s, and in the United States later still. When I began to teach the subject, at Oxford in 1951, I had few books to tell me how to teach or write it. Most earlier books were compilations of facts by scholars who were primarily teachers of language and literature, such as Philip Hitti and Carl Brockelmann. I do not wish to denigrate their work. What they did, and did well, was a necessary preparation for what came later; it was the careful elucidation of what may have happened, on the basis of literary works written in other ages and for other purposes. Almost the only

relevant historical works which showed high standards were those of diplomatic history, studies of the "Eastern question." I have never lost my taste for this kind of historical writing, although I am aware of its limitations: the countries and peoples of the Middle East usually appear as a passive body over which European powers competed, fought, and sometimes agreed. In my earlier years as a teacher, few works were being published which promised something more; but at least there were some studies by Claude Cahen which revealed an acute and highly trained historical intelligence, and the first part of Gibb and Bowen's *Islamic Society and the West* came out shortly before I began to teach (although it had been written earlier).

Since then I have seen the growth in the serious study of Middle Eastern history by well-trained historians who now form a "critical mass," by which books can be assessed and ideas formulated and discussed. So far at least as modern history is concerned, there have been three overlapping trends. The first is that of political history, written within the framework of some kind of theory of "modernization." Books of this kind can be as good as Bernard Lewis's *Emergence of Modern Turkey*,[12] but on the whole they tend to ignore the interaction between government and society. They tell us what "modernizing" governments and elites wished to do and what they thought they had done, but what in fact was happening—how the process appeared to those whom the rulers were trying to change, or how they accepted the process but changed its direction—does not appear clearly; the "two rhythms of change," to use Berque's idiom, are lacking.

Side by side with this kind of writing there grew up another one, a kind of intellectual history, such as I tried to write in my earlier book, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*. I would not write it now in the same way. It looked too exclusively, I now think, at those movements of thought which accepted ideas coming from Europe, and it saw those movements as embodied in a line of individual thinkers who seemed to be particularly important, or at least to be representative of important strands of thought. Those of us who wrote in this way tended to neglect other thinkers who did not accept ideas coming from Europe, or who, if they accepted them, tried to incorporate them within a framework of thought which still relied on traditional categories and methods. Thinkers of this kind were more important than we believed at that time: Christian Troll's study of Sayyid Ahmad Khan shows how even he, the foremost "modernizer" of Muslim India in the 19th century, was more deeply "traditional" than he was once believed to be. Once more the complex interaction of the two rhythms of change was lacking in our work. There was a failure, too, to go beyond individual thinkers, and try systematically to see how far their ideas expressed those of any substantial element in the societies to which they belonged, or how far they had an influence upon them.

Now we are in the age of "social history," the study of economic relationships and the deep structures of society, and of changes in them, within a framework of ideas derived from Marxism, or from the historians of the *Annales* school, or from a mixture of the two. At its most interesting, this becomes a study of the relationships between power and wealth, how each of them affects the other: in other words, of "political economy," to use an old term which in recent years has

been given a new usage. As early as 1953, A. K. S. Lambton produced a work of lasting value, *Landlord and Peasant in Persia*,[13] without an explicit theoretical framework, but with a deep insight into the realities of Iranian life. On the whole, however, studies of this kind came later: André Raymond on Egypt, Halil Inalcik and Suraiya Faroqhi on the Ottoman economy and society, and Hanna Batatu on *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq*.[14]

In the interplay of wealth and power, where is human consciousness? The danger of social history is that it may tend to reduce the lives of individual human beings to movements of classes or other collectivities. In recent French historiography there is an attempt to correct this by linking socioeconomic change to another kind of change, that of collective mentalities. The value of this has been shown in such important and critical works as the studies of attitudes toward death by Philippe Ariès and Michel Vovelle. There are the first beginnings of such an approach in Middle Eastern history too: in recent works on changes in family relationships, and Cornell Fleischer's study of the Ottoman bureaucratic mentality.[15]

Even here, however, something is missing. Somewhere in our writing of history we need to show historical processes as reflected in the minds of individuals who are able to articulate them and, in so doing, to change their nature. There is, of course, a danger in this, that of saying or implying that great individual thinkers are the motive force of historical change: Marshall Hodgson did not altogether avoid this. Even if they do not themselves create the changes, however, they can give them a meaning, and to decipher this meaning is an essential part of our work as historians. If the ideas of Power and Wealth can be organizing principles of historical thought, so too can Truth.

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NOTES

[1]P. M. Holt, Ann K. S. Lambton, and Bernard Lewis, eds., *The Cambridge History of Islam*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1970); Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, 3 vols. (Chicago, 1974); Ira M. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies* (Cambridge, 1988).

[2]See Albert Hourani, *Islam in European Thought* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 25–26.

[3]Dominique Chevallier, "De la production lente à l'économie dynamique en Syrie," *Annales ESC*, 21 (1966), 59–70.

[4]H. A. R. Gibb, *Modern Trends in Islam* (Chicago, 1947).

[5]Gilbert Delanoue, *Moralistes et politiques musulmans dans l'Egypte du XIXe siècle*, 2 vols. (Cairo, 1982); Hamid Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought* (London, 1982); Christian W. Troll, *Sayyid Ahmad Khan* (New Delhi, 1978).

[6]Jacques Berque, *L'Egypte: Impérialisme et révolution* (Paris, 1967); English trans., *Egypt: Imperialism and Revolution* (London, 1972).

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